

Conservation News and Thoughts

by Arthur Feinstein and Carolyn Kolka

The New Year started with a bang in Washington, D.C. when Alaska Congressman Don Young, Chair of the House Resources Committee, stated, "I am proud to call environmentalists my enemy."

This should not come as a surprise. After all, until Mr. Young's appointment, the committee was called the House *Natural* Resources Committee. Clearly Mr. Young has an aversion to anything connected with nature. (What is he doing in Alaska?)

From the above, we can only conclude that the new legislative session in Washington, D.C. will present us with a full array of anti-environmental bills. Once again we will exhort you to write letters and make phone calls.

Please don't get jaded or disillusioned and give up the effort.

Remember, your letters do have an effect. No clearer example exists than the fact that during the last two years, despite Congress's clear intent to weaken all environmental laws, they did not succeed. Those of you who wrote and phoned can take full credit for that defeat (along with the millions of other Americans who took the time to express their opinion to their legislators).

So gear up, get your pen and writing paper ready, and prepare to do your part to help save our natural world.

Armchair Activist:

For those of you who have not participated in this grand effort as fully as you might wish because of time and energy constraints, we have an easy way for you to take part in GGAS' Conservation efforts.

Our Armchair Activist program is

Continued on page 5





November 28 to December 30

The story this month must surely be the weather and its effects on birds seen during this period. There was only one pelagic trip able to make it out during the month, that being on Monterey Bay. In addition, many of the Christmas Bird Counts were held in wet and windy conditions, thereby reducing the number of species and overall counts in many locations. That withstanding, there were some highlights and surprises.

Albatrosses to Geese

With seabird reports scarce this month, one of the highlights is the return of the Laysan Albatross to Point Arena, MEN, on Dec 3 (GS) for the third year in a row. This bird is overwintering at the same location at the Point Arena Cove as in previous years. Another Laysan Albatross was found in Monterey Bay on Dec 1 (DLSh), with a Flesh-footed Shearwater also seen that same trip. Sooty Shearwaters, uncommon in the winter months, were reported from Pigeon Point, SM, with 15 birds seen on Dec 15 (PJM). Also seen that day were 4 Black-vented Shearwaters with one seen there on Dec 7. A Short-tailed Shearwater was seen during the Point Reyes CBC, MRN, on Dec 21 (per DW) with a single Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel also recorded.

An unbanded **Trumpeter Swan** found on Dec 3 (SRBA) was seen on and off until at least Dec 19 as it moved between Sutter and Placer counties with a large flock of Tundra Swan. **Emperor Geese** made a strong showing in our area during this period with one bird seen Dec 6 to 14 (JW), at

McKerricher State Park, MEN, and another at Bodega Bay, SON, found on Dec 12 (BH) and which remains as of the time of writing. Two birds were found Dec 20 in Humboldt Bay (JS). Unfortunately these birds could not be found the following day, and the general consensus was that they may have been shot. An additional two birds were seen on private property in Mendocino County on Dec 28 during the local CBC (DT).

Eurasian Wigeon were again reported from San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Mendocino counties and up to three birds at Bodega Bay. A Eurasian Green-winged Teal was at Steven's Creek, SCL (SR), on Dec 14/15. In Marin up to 2 Harlequin Ducks continued at the Fish Docks, with reports of up to 5 birds seen at Glass Beach, Fort Bragg, MEN, during this period. Barrow's Goldeneye was also well reported at various locations with up to 100 birds at Lake Merritt in Oakland, ALA. The first Tufted Duck of the winter was reported from the Sunnyvale Pollution Control Ponds, SCL on Dec 27, an adult male (BR).

Hawks to Gulls

Coastal Northern Goshawks were found Dec 6 in El Granada, SM (BS), and Dec 10 at Point Reyes (RS). Swainson's Hawks were found in Sacramento County, with up to 4 birds on Dec 8, while an additional 3 birds were seen along the Holland Tract, CC (FB), a location of wintering birds this past year. A Bald Eagle seen flying over the Marin Headlands on Nov 28 was interesting (EB).

The only report of Mountain

Plovers was of 4 birds near King City, MTY, on Nov 30 (per MPRBA). Pacific Golden Plover remained near Pigeon Point, SM, with up to 3 birds, while a single bird was recorded at the RCA Fields, PRNS, on Dec 21 (per DW). Rock Sandpipers were reported again from Glass Beach at Fort Bragg, with up to 2 birds seen during the month (DT).

Another highlight for this period was a report of **Lesser Black-backed Gull** at Alviso, SCL, presumably the same bird that overwintered at this location last year. This bird was found Dec 25 (MM) along the trail from the Alviso Marina. It has subsequently been seen on and off and remains as of this writing. Glaucous Gulls were well reported from many coastal locations. An apparent "**Kumliens**" **Iceland Gull** was found Dec 15 in Petaluma, SON (JM). Currently there are no accepted records of this species in California. All submitted records are currently on hold pending the clarification of the status of this species by the American Ornithological Union with reference to Thayer's and Iceland Gulls. Up to 5 Black Skimmers still remained at Charleston Slough, SCL, while a Horned Puffin seen Dec 13 off Fort Bragg was the only report in our area this year (DT).

Hummingbirds to Warblers

A Costa's Hummingbird was reported near Willits, MEN, on Dec 22 (BK). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers remained at Ed Levin County Park, SCL, and Mills College, ALA, dur-

ing the month. An additional two birds were seen on private property in Marin during the Point Reyes CBC (per DW).

Another late Ash-throated Flycatcher was found at the Guadalupe River on Nov 30 and remains as of this writing (KH). A **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** was found at Stern Grove in San Francisco on Nov 30 (HC, DPM) which also remains as of this writing. Another was found in Santa Cruz on Dec 6, which also remains (MPRBA). An Eastern Phoebe was found in San Mateo on Dec 28 (RT).

Good numbers of Empidonax also were in evidence. The Hammond's Flycatcher at Inverness, MRN, was again reported during the Point Reyes CBC (per DW), while another was banded at the BSOL, MTY on Dec 16. A "Western" Flycatcher was found in Sacramento during the month, and an "Empidonax" flycatcher seen Dec 15 in Half Moon Bay, SM, was believed to be either a Gray or a Dusky Flycatcher (DP).

An interesting report of Pinyon Jays was of a flock of 10-12 seen near Point Reyes Station on Dec 22 (RS). A first county record of Clark's Nutcracker was found in Davis, YOL, on Nov 30 (DS). Rare in winter, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen in Alameda and San Mateo counties during the month (KL). Northern Shrikes appeared in Mono County, Dec 3 (JM), near Sacramento on Dec 6 and near Covelo, MEN, from Dec 8 to at least Dec 18 (CC).

Solitary Vireo reports included birds of the "Blue-Headed" race in San Francisco and San Mateo at the end of Nov, with a "Plumbeous" Vireo also reported

in San Francisco at Stow Lake, Golden Gate Park on Dec 24 (AH).

Warbler highlights this month included Lucy's Warblers in Monterey and San Francisco and Hooded Warbler in Santa Clara. Details are as follows:

Black & White Warbler

Dec 21 Half Moon Bay, SM (RT)
Dec 22/23 Lodi, SJ (JS)
Dec 28 Muir Beach, MRN (HCa)
Dec 28 Mendocino CBC (DT)

Tennessee Warbler

Dec 15 San Bruno, SM (RT)

Lucy's Warbler

Nov 30 Lake Merced, SF (PJM)
Dec 27 Monterey CBC

Palm Warbler

Nov 30 - Dec 15 Fort Funston, SF (PJM)
Dec 21 San Mateo (RT)

Northern Waterthrush

Continuing birds in Bodega Bay and Alviso, SCL

Hooded Warbler

Nov 28- Present Female along Guadalupe River, SM (SR)

American Redstart

Dec 27 Monterey CBC

Blackbirds to Longspurs

A **Rusty Blackbird** was an interesting find on the Corte Madera CBC, MRN, on Dec 28 (JP). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak found near Point Reyes Station, MRN, on Dec 1 remained at least through Dec 10 (RP). Western Tanagers were found in many locations during this period while an Indigo Bunting was along the Guadalupe River, SM, on Nov 28 (SR). Cassin's Finches continued to be well reported, with birds being found in Alameda, San Mateo and San Francisco.

The monthly *Observation* column is generated from reports made to the Northern California Bird Box and Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert (MPRBA) or to the author. Some sightings are unconfirmed, and numbers of birds are often best regarded as estimates or "best guesses." In general, birds in boldface are rare in our region, geographically or seasonally. Many of these are currently reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Observers are encouraged to provide written and/or photographic documentation to the CBRC, c/o Michael Patten, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959 for any species currently on the review list. A list of review species can also be obtained from the CBRC secretary at that address.

This information is made possible by all the observers who contributed their reports to the Northern California Bird Box and Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert, (MPRBA).

If anybody has photos of birds reported in this column and would be interested in letting us post them on our web site, we would be very appreciative. Please feel free to contact me to discuss.

Abbreviations for Observers: FB, Florence Bennett; EB, Ellen Bluestein; CC, Chris Carter; HCa, Harrison Carr; HC, Hugh Cotter; BH, Bruce Hoilet; AH, Alan Hopkins; KHi, Kevin Hints; BK, Bob Keiffer; KL, Kay Loughman; MM, Mike Mammoser; PJM, Peter Metropolis; JM, Joe Morlan; DPM, Dan Murphy; CN, Christi Nelson; JP, Jeff Perkins; RP, Roy Poucher; DP, David Powell; BR, Bob Reiling; SR, Steve Rottenborn; BS, Barry Sauppe; RS, Rich Stallcup; JS, John Sterling; MS, Maury Stern; GS, Grace Steuer; DS, Dan Stoebel; RT, Ron Thorn; DT, Dorothy Tobkin; JW, Jerry White; DW, David Wimpfheimer.

Abbreviations for counties: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; HUM, Humboldt; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MTY, Monterey; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SON, Sonoma; YOL, Yolo. Other abbreviations used: PRNS- Point Reyes National Seashore, Marin; per MPRBA - per Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows continued to be reported at the Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, throughout the month, with up to 4 birds present on Dec 25 (CN). A Harris's Sparrow was found in Contra Costa on Dec 5 (MS) and continued to be seen through Dec 21. A Black-throated Sparrow frequented a feeder near Sacramento, this being only the third county record for this species (SRBC)

The previously reported McCown's Longspur remained near Nicholas in Placer County at least through Nov 29, being joined by at least 3 Lapland Longspur (RP, SRBA).

Birdathon '97

A True Valentine

by John Gibbons

From sadness to despair, suffering to death; the raven has symbolized the gamete of gloom. However, true love and devotion are not notions conjured up by its deep croaking calls, despite the fact that the bond between raven spouses is among the strongest in the bird world.

With the winds blowing over the iceplant of Land's End, she finds a patch of sand to sit upon and watch as he flies overhead, impressing her with his aerial acrobatics. Dipping and spinning, he finally alights before her with a gift – a beautiful shard of green bottle glass.

Proud of his offering, he marches up and down in front of her, twisting his head to show off the glass to its full potential. Like a spectator at Wimbledon, her head follows him back and forth until he finally turns and offers her the present. Placing his beak to hers, they duel in slow motion as protocol seems to dictate, and then she stands and takes the glass.

First this side and then the other, she puts the prize at her feet and inspects it like a true jewel. Can't be too hasty! After careful consideration, however,



PHOTO BY JOHN P. GIBBONS

she ruffles her glossy black feathers and picks up the glass. Judging by his anxious reaction, this must be a good sign.

Catching the next updraft, she ascends into the air, circling above, exuberant

over the lovely present. After a few minutes of celebration, she lands before her suitor, ruffles her feathers again, and offers him the very same piece of glass. And as if he had never seen it before, he takes it to inspect.

the hour goes by as the raven and her suitor exchange roles of courter and courted couples, with each exchanging roles in turn. And it is here that the ravens special relationship is best exhibited. Despite their newlywed behavior, this may very well be their fourth or fifth year together! Their air shows and gift giving, along with many hoarse duets are their way of confirming their devotion for one another. Knowing that competition is always near, each affirms the relationship by constantly renewing it. This gives them both confidence and security in each other. They realize the value of their bond and work hard to keep it, and when a raven finds its true love, it will look for a valentine nevermore.

One of GGAS's major fund raisers, the annual Birdathon, has been scheduled Saturday, April 26, 1997 – John Audubon's Birthday!! For those of you not familiar with this event, it's basically Birding-for-Bucks, in which birders gather pledges of money for each species recorded on the day of the Birdathon. Participation can be as active as being a Team Leader, to gathering pledges from friends and relatives for each bird you spot at your bird feeder, to simply writing a check for the amount pledged to your favorite birder.

This year corporate sponsorship is being encouraged. If you work for a large company, or a small generous one, you could form a corporate team and compete with teams from other departments in your company or with other companies.

Half of the money will go to Audubon Adventures and the other half will go to a bird conservation project (the specific one to be chosen at a later date.)

There will be prizes for the most successful pledge gatherers and good birding for all! If you are interested in being a team leader or would like more information, call Anna-Marie Bratton at (415) 452-1809 in the evening or watch for more about Birdathon 1997 news in the March Gull..

Conservation News

designed for people who are simply too busy to do more than write one letter a month. We make that one letter easy for you. **It won't take more than a half hour of your time each month.**

When you become an Armchair Activist, you get one four-page mailing from us each month. Each mailing will describe clearly and briefly the issue we are working on for that month. Example include the Headwaters Forest, wetlands, salvage logging, or attacks on our endangered species laws.

The mailing will also contain a sample letter showing you who to write to, the address, and some of the things to include in your letter.

It's very easy, doesn't take much time, and you will enjoy that warm feeling of accomplishment. You will have done your part in helping to preserve our birds, forests and wetlands.

Over 120 GGAS members have joined the Armchair Activist Team. We urge you to join and help us reach our goal of having over 200 Armchair Activists by the end of 1997.

To join the Armchair Activist Team, simply call or write the GGAS office, 510-845-2222, and give us your name, address, and phone number (you can leave the information on our answering

machine if we're not there) and tell us that you want to be an Armchair Activist. We look forward to your call.

You can also e-mail us this information at 71642.65@compuserve.com. If enough of you show an interest, we will consider sending out the monthly Armchair Activist on e-mail to those of you who wish to receive it in that manner. (If this interests you, please give us your e-mail address in addition to your regular mailing address and phone number.)

Klamath National Wildlife Refuges:

Finally, the Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, and three other neighboring National Wildlife Refuges, which are located on the Oregon-California border, provide wetland habitat for one of the largest populations of migrat-

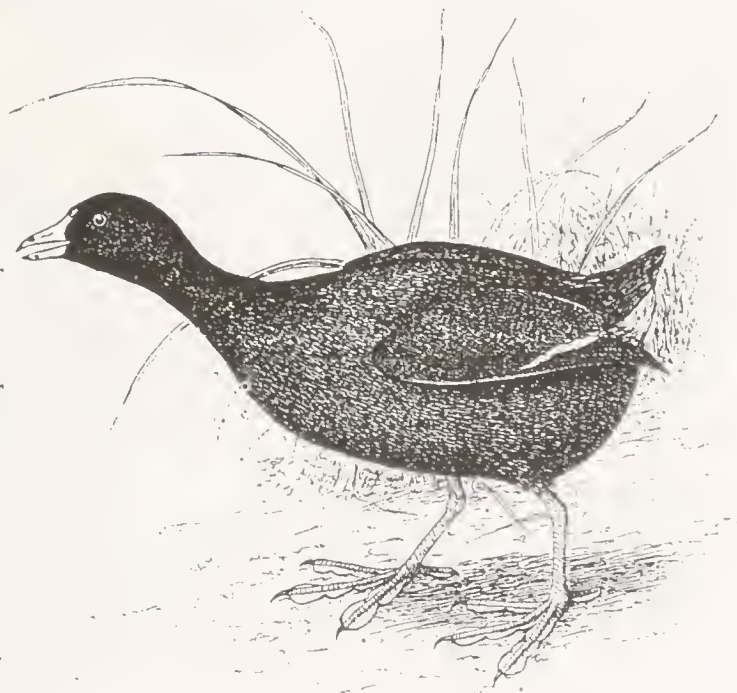
ing and wintering waterfowl on the West Coast.

These Refuges are being threatened by drought and pesticides. Even in wet years, the Bureau of Reclamation has in the past diverted most of the water in that region to agricultural purposes and has left the Refuge wetlands barren and dry (the storms this year may offset these management plans, but it is an ongoing problem).

Also, supposedly compatible agriculture is allowed on much of the Refuge lands. Years ago, Refuge management restricted the use of pesticides on these lands. But recent efforts by farmers to overturn these pesticide restrictions have been gaining success.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society has long recognized the importance of the Klamath River Refuges. Many of the birds we love to see in the Bay Area first stop at the Klamath wetlands. Therefore, we have joined a group of other environmental organizations in writing a letter to the Department of the Interior indicating that we may sue them if they do not correct these management practices.

The language that created the Refuges is clear. It states that any agriculture use on Refuge lands must be compatible with wildlife management and that adequate water must be provided. It's absurd that one must threaten litigation in order to have a very clear law enforced, but if that's what it takes, we are willing to take that action. **J**



Come See The Seals!

Members of the newly formed GGAS committee, Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge (FAWR), invite you to join us Saturday, February 15, for a docent-led visit to the Ano Nuevo State Reserve. This winter the elephant seals haul out in greater numbers than ever, and visiting dabblers, divers, and other shorebirds are everywhere along the coast.

Tickets for \$10 each are reserved especially for us at three different times

Each tour of the rookery includes 2.5 hours of easy walking and covers a total of 3 miles with several stops along the way to see the two-ton elephant seal males battling over females, the females giving birth to this year's crop of pups, weaning them,

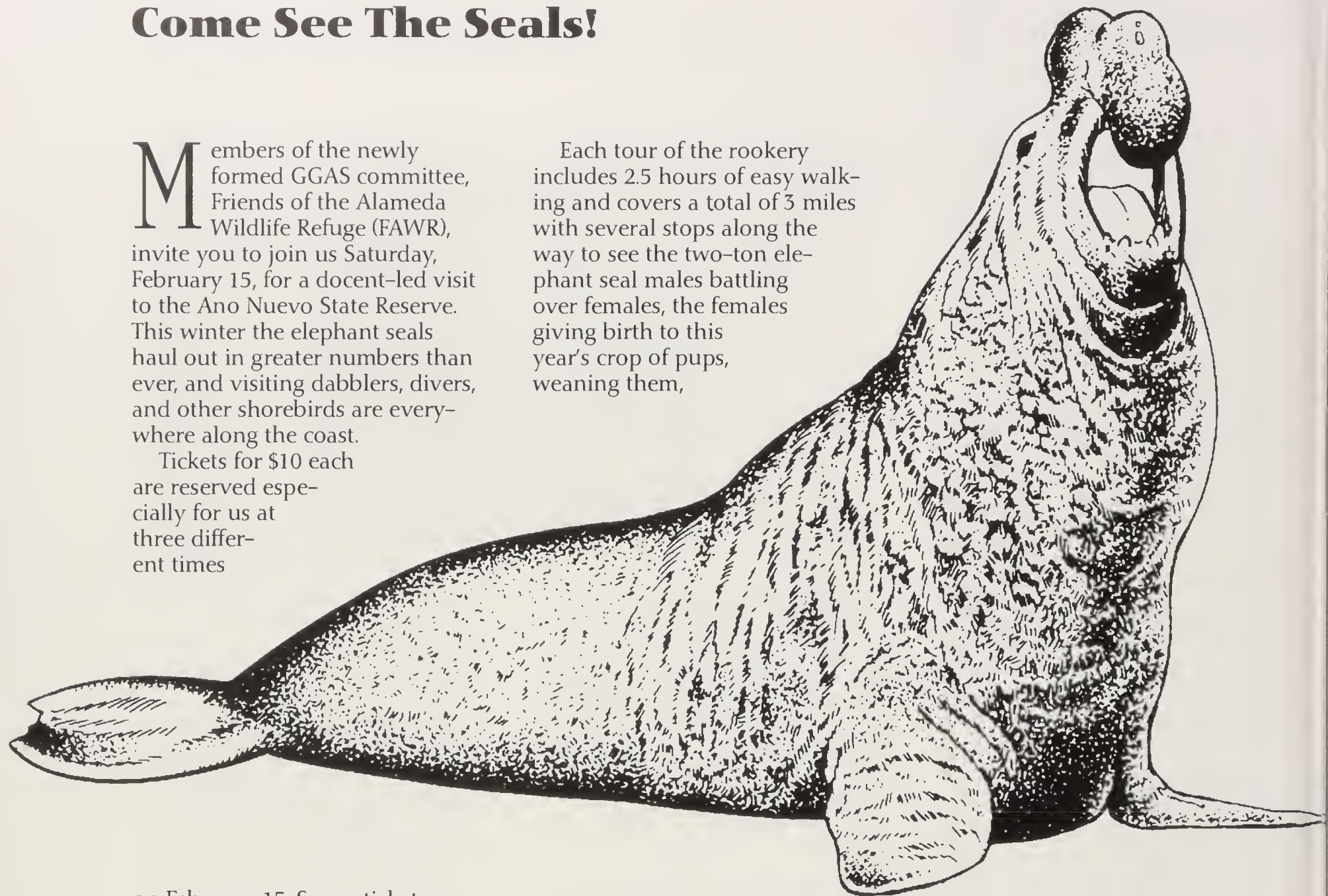
on February 15. Seven tickets are available at 9:15 a.m., 20 tickets at 1:00 p.m., and five tickets at 2:15 p.m. Group tickets are difficult to secure and provide the only access to the elephant seal colony, Northern California's most important elephant seal and sea lion rookery. A portion of each ticket fee goes to the FAWR to support interpretive and educational activities being planned for the Alameda National Wildlife Refuge, the newest addition to the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

mating with the males, and preparing to go back out to sea. Offshore waters offer California gray whales, northern fur seals, and sea otters. Nearby tidepools sustain more than 300 species of invertebrates, and migratory shorebirds are abundant.

Make your check payable to Golden Gate Audubon Society and send it to the GGAS office at 2430 San Pablo Ave., Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. Be sure to

indicate the number of tickets you wish to reserve and at which tour time. Include your name, address, and phone number. All trips go, rain or shine. There are no refunds, and you must be at the Ano Nuevo Visitor Center at least 20 minutes before your tour departs.

For more information about this trip or about FAWR, call Corinne Stefanick at 510/769-8931.



We have the seed you need!

If you wish to order seed, please fill out the adjacent seed-order form, and mail it to us with a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society (or GGAS), with a self-addressed stamped envelope. **Orders should be received in the GGAS office by Thursday, February 20. Pick up of seed will take place Friday, February 28, 3 - 6PM, and Saturday, March 1, 9AM - 1PM, at the Golden Gate Audubon Society office in Berkeley.**

We will have extra seed on hand, so if you didn't order enough seed, or forgot to order any seed at all, come on down to the office anyway.

Volkman seed (the Premium and GGAS mixes) is the best there is. It contains no waste seed and has been cleaned of debris and dust so you get what you pay for. If you have a question about which kind of seed to buy, give us a call at the GGAS office (510-843-2222).

The Duncraft Feeder is a 16" long tube seed-feeder. We also have a variety of hummingbird feeders, and the Hummzinger hummingbird feeder now comes in two sizes, 12 and 16 oz.

Birdseed sale pick-up on
February 20 & 28, and
March 1, 1997

Show that you're proud to be a GGAS member and order one of our handsome hats. They are black, baseball-style caps adorned with our famous GGAS logo. One-size-fits-all. The hats cost \$15, and we will mail them to you. Please add \$2 for postage and handling in addition to the tax.

We also have very attractive enamel GGAS lapel pins. They are 1" long in white, blue and gold, and the design is our logo (Gull and Golden Gate bridge) for \$6.

Remember, your purchases provide an important source of income to GGAS, allowing us to continue our conservation, education and field-trip activities. We look forward to seeing you on seed-sale day.

GGAS BIRD SEED AND FEEDER SALE
ORDER AND PREPAY BY FEBRUARY 20, 1997
PICK UP FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, SATURDAY, MARCH 1

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
TELEPHONE (DAY) _____ (EVENING) _____

SEED	QUANTITY	AMOUNT
GGAS' OWN MIX	20 lbs.	\$ 9.00
Contains only red and white millet and black oil sunflower seed	50 lbs.	\$19.50
VOLKMAN PREMIUM	20 lbs.	\$ 8.50
WILD BIRD SEED	50 lbs.	\$18.50
Composed of only red and white millet — no sunflower seeds (no squirrels)		
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED	25 lbs.	\$15.00
	50 lbs.	\$27.00
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER CHIPS	25 lbs.	\$26.00
(No waste!)		
NIGER (THISTLE) SEED	5 lbs.	\$10.75
FEEDERS		
DUNCRAFT SEED FEEDER 16"	\$28.00	
THISTLE FEEDER	\$10.00	
HUMMINGBIRD (window)	\$10.00	
ZINGER (saucer style)	\$15.50	
HUMMINGBIRD (16 oz. bottle)	\$12.00	
SUET CAGE (2" x 5" x 5")	\$ 5.50	
SUET CAKE (11.75 oz.)	\$ 2.75	
FEEDER POLE (sectional)	\$16.00	
GGAS Hat	\$15.00	
GGAS Lapel Pin	\$ 6.00	

Be sure to include
your check with a
stamped and self-
addressed envelope.

Pick up in Berkeley at
the GGAS office

SUB-TOTAL
8.25% SALES TAX
TOTAL
CONTRIBUTION TO GGAS
POSTAGE FOR HATS
GRAND TOTAL



Backyard Birder *by Meg Pauletich*

At this time of year, it seems that I do more backyard birding. Cold, wet or foggy days are for snuggling inside my home, peeking from windows to check bird activity. From my kitchen window, I can spot hummers sipping, occasional bathers in the birdbath or the squirrel trying to bounce off the baffle, thus defying the squirrel-proof feeder. From my bedroom or dining room table I can keep tabs on the arrivals and departures at the feeding stations. The Chestnut-backed Chickadees have dibs on the satellite sunflower feeder, all sorts of seed-eaters including Acorn Woodpeckers, feed from the cylinder feeder, while the thistle sock is usually covered with Pine Siskins. A hanging birdbath provides sips for all. Now that the flowering chestnut has lost all of its leaves, I can track the White-breasted Nuthatch as he bops down the trunk. The deck is strewn with ground-feeding birds such as doves, juncos and an assortment of sparrows and towhees. When all is quiet, I usually spot a Cooper's Hawk perched sen-

tinel-like as it observes from an oak tree.

One afternoon I was about to charge out the front door when I put on the brakes to watch a birdbath vignette. The loud splashing of a Golden-crowned Sparrow had attracted the attention of a gang of Bushtits. Two brave ones came to the water's edge but looked wary, as if it might be too deep. Indecision plagued the group. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet, attracted by the commotion, dropped onto the lip of the bath. Finally, curiosity overcame two Bushtits and they plunged in, driving the sparrow away. It was as if they were doing a bird's

version of a cannonball dive as, one by one, eleven of them crowded the birdbath. What a delightful sight!

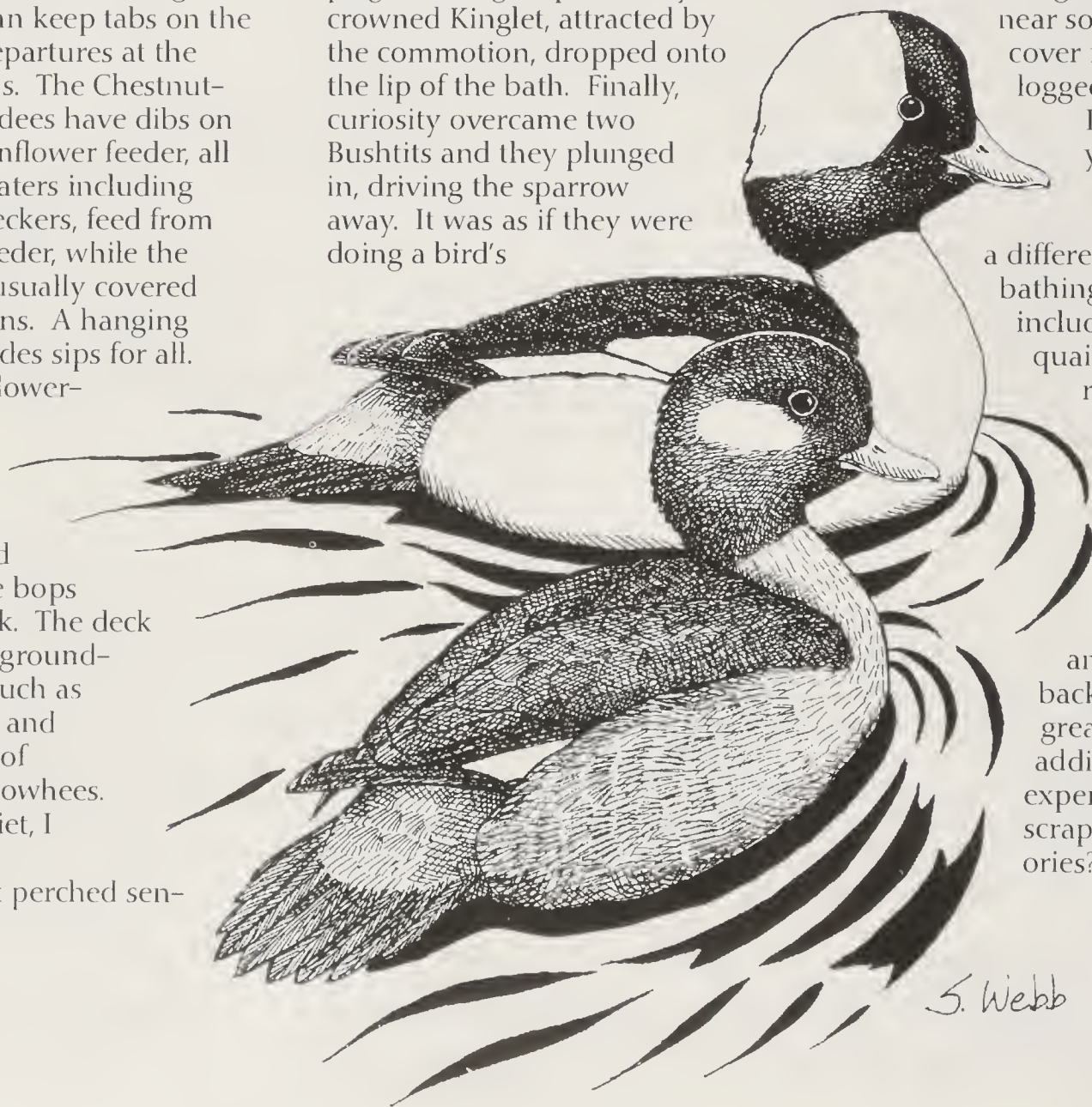
Since birds must keep their feathers fastidiously groomed, morning and evening baths are a must. Even a mud puddle will do - which proves that, fancy or not, any container with water will attract birds. Have an old garbage can lid? It'll serve nicely

as long as you place it near some shrubs as cover for water-logged birds.

In summer, if you have a dusty spot, you can see

a different kind of bathing. Many birds, including doves and quail, love a good roll in a "dust bowl," driving those pesky mites and bugs from their feathers.

Enjoy the antics in your backyard! Isn't it great to keep adding new birding experiences to our scrapbook of memories?!



Of Birds and Their Watchers

Why are there those among us who are willing to sit still for hours with only a field guide and binoculars for company? Because as Leonard Nathan writes "....waiting itself has a relish, for it is not waiting merely, but waiting with the hope of seeing something extraordinary."

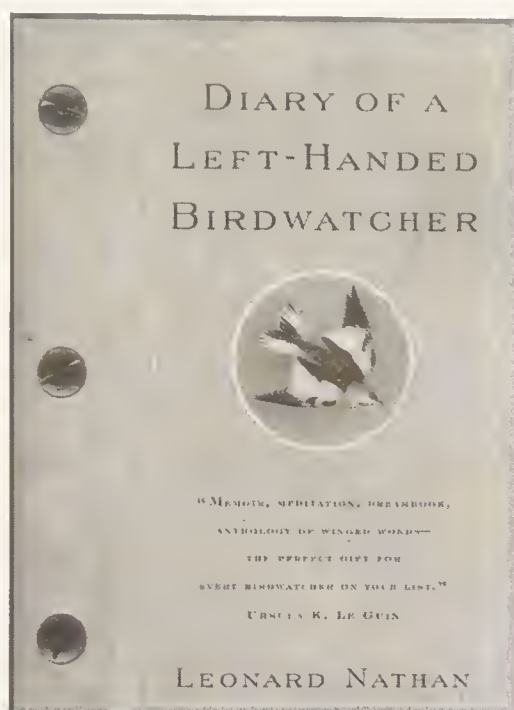
It is this "extraordinary seeing" this (in Nathan's words) "epiphany" that binds his new book *Diary of a Left-Handed Birdwatcher*. In it, Nathan is in search of many things, experiences, definitions, and the relationship between the two. Through poetry, history, friendly debates and personal experiences, he places before the reader the idea that there is something deeper to the act of birdwatching than human seeing bird. There is recognition and thrill, the satisfaction of desire. And this, he says, can be an

epiphany, although he runs into a few obstacles trying to prove his point.

There are people who can express their thoughts and experiences vividly and interestingly in speech, and then there are those who can also eloquently translate them onto paper. Leonard Nathan belongs to the latter. The charm and wit sewn throughout the book create a wonderful and enjoyable platform for Nathan to apply his theory.

When you do something for a long time, your initial passions

can slowly become routine interests. Through his vivid descriptions and prose, however, he reminds the reader why they began watching birds in the first place. He shows that another Yellow-rumped Warbler is not just another Yellow-rumped Warbler if the watcher has passion enough.



"Why are watchers so reluctant to lower their binoculars? To make sure of the identity of the bird, yes, but also from a strong desire to prolong so special a seeing, not the consummation of the hunt, but the experience of knowledge. The meaning and mystery of otherness."

In Memory and Thanks to Mike Nitschke

The Golden Gate Audubon Society would like to thank Dr. Joachim Michael Nitschke for his generous parting gift to us. Having passed away in February 1995, Mike was at the peak of his career as a Senior Nuclear Scientist at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and will be sorely missed in the world-wide scientific community.

Born in Berlin, Germany on April 27, 1938 (the eve of World War II), became a very accomplished man. Along with his countless contributions to the world of science and chemistry, he was also a great teacher and often participated in mentor programs, lecturing to students and teachers to reach out and persuade them that science was a wonderful avocation.

He also loved the outdoors, and his donation will help the Society's efforts to make this a better world.



Field Trips Calendar

GAS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1 PANOCHÉ VALLEY

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy 25 and J-1 in Paicines, 12.5 miles south of Hollister. From there we will drive east to I-5 south of Los Banos. This trip traverses raptor habitat that usually produces Golden Eagles, Merlins, and Prairie Falcons, plus Mountain Bluebirds, Phainopeplas and Vesper Sparrows. Considering the distance involved in this trip, be sure to fill your gas tank before leaving Hollister, and carpool from the Bay Area if possible. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Chris Carpenter (510) 569-9281 day, (510) 547-2201 eve. (*)

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2 LAKE MERRITT

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Grand Ave. and El Embarcadero by the Greek Colonade. This is an excellent opportunity to observe wintering ducks and grebes at close range, and to study their field identification. This trip is recommended for beginners and is wheelchair

accessible. Bring binoculars, scope and field guide if you have them. Trip ends at noon. Rain cancels. Leader: Joan Zawaski (415) 433-1700 days; (510) 530-2427 eve. (*)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8 MCCLAREN PARK, CANDLESTICK POINT, SO. SAN FRANCISCO

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at McClaren Park at the intersection of Cambridge and John F. Shelley Drive. We should see Bewick's Wren, Western Meadowlark and other "common" birds we don't often see in the city. We will then caravan to Candlestick Point Recreation Area where there will be ducks, shorebirds and possibly a Peregrine Falcon. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983. (*)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12 MINI-TRIP TO COYOTE HILLS REGIONAL PARK

Meet at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot by the Visitors' Center at the end of the road. From the East Bay take I-880 south to Newark and turn right at Rt. 84/Dumbarton Bridge exit. Continue west and exit on Paseo Padre Pkwy. Turn right and continue north one mile to Patterson Ranch Rd. and follow the signs to Coyote Hills. We will be looking for three species of teal and other wintering waterfowl. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 & Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$) (*)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 BRIONES REGIONAL PARK, OLD BRIONES ROAD ENTRANCE, CONTRA COSTA

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot at the end of Old Briones Road. From Berkeley take Hwy.24 to the Pleasant Hill Road off ramp. Go north on Pleasant Hill Road; left at Taylor Blvd. (take the left fork); left at Grayson; right at Reliez Valley Road which becomes Alhambra Valley Road; left into the park at Old Briones Road. Drive cautiously on Old Briones Road, which is narrow and winding. (A map is recommended.) The trail will take us gradually uphill for about 1 to 2 miles. When we reach the top, we will have panoramic views of the Diablo Valley, Mt. Diablo and the Delta. We should also see Western Bluebirds, White-breasted Nuthatch and Nuttall's Woodpecker. Beginners welcome. Dress in layers and be prepared for cold. Rain cancels. If it rains within a few days of the trip, waterproof shoes are recommended. Trip will end at about 1:00 p.m. Leader: Peter Dramer (510) 845-1033. (*)

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22 WOODBIDGE ROAD ECOLOGICAL AREA, SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AREA

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the intersection of I-5 and Hwy. 12, west of Lodi. We will see Sandhill Cranes and Tundra Swans at the Woodbridge Road Ecological Area, then caravan to other locations to be determined on the day

of the trip. Be prepared for cold. Beginners welcome. Rain cancels. Fog may make viewing difficult. Trip will end by 1:00 p.m. Leader: Jim Rowoth (209) 462-7512. Carpooling: call Lillian Fujii (510)236-4167.

SATURDAY MARCH 8 LAS GALLINAS SEWER PONDS, MARIN COUNTY

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot. Take 101 north and exit at the Lucas Valley Drive/Smith Ranch Road off ramp. Go east on Smith Ranch Road to the end. Take a sharp left to the sewage treatment ponds, just before the county park. Drive past the headquarters to the parking lot on the left. We will see wintering ducks and shorebirds, keeping in mind that anything can show up. Trip will end at noon. Beginners welcome. Leader: Hugh Cotter (415) 752-6776.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 12 MINI TRIP TO MITCHELL CANYON

We will meet at 9:30 a.m. Take Hwy. 24 through the Caldecott Tunnel. At Walnut Creek take the Ygnacio Valley Rd. exit. Go approximately 8 miles, then turn right onto Clayton Rd. Go one mile and make a right onto Mitchell Canyon Rd. and proceed to the parking lot at the end of the road. (Parking outside the entrance will avoid a parking fee.) This is a delightful area with easy streamside walking and many songbirds. Wear shoes suitable for walking in mud and bring your lunch. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$)

Gifts and Bequests

Janet Andersen, Richard Bachenheimer, Karen Benzel, George & Virginia Bing, Eleanor Briccetti, Barry & Barabara Deutsch, Naomi Groeschel, I. von der Hude, Harold Kirker, Jane & Michael Larkin, Anne MacPherson, Dean & Julia Mayberry, Robert & Mary Mayer, Thomas Medin, H. A. & Patricia Monteau, John Nelson & Hortensia Chang, James & Joyce Schnobrich, Ira & James Uren

For the Bird Box

Paul & Joan Arer, Stephanie Arthur, George & Virginia Bing, Greg Black, Robert & Barbara Brandriff, Russel Bright & Linda Hernandez, Beverly Brock, Roy & Joyce Carlson, Zoe & Theodore Chandik, Hugh Cotter, John & Janette Dang, Gary & Shari Deghi, Ann Dewart, John Dineen, Richard Dorrance, Ruth Doty, Robert & Mary Dunn, Alan Eisner, David French, Kate & Harry Fuller, Gene Gerlach, Gerald & Madelon Halpern, Kieth Hansen, David & Merry Haveman, William Haven, Donna Heim, Scott & Claudia Hein, Lawrence Kent, Theodore Kounakjian, Robert Leong, Cynthia & Leslie Lieurance, William Lofthouse, Lucy & Calvin Lou, John Luther, Judy & Albert McKee, Roy & Barbara Magnuson, Peter Metropulos, John & Maria Meyer, Alan & Jackie Mode, Timothy Molter, Todd Morris, David Nelson, Carl & Bess Nericcio, A. T. & Louise Newberry, Theodore & Marjorie Plant, Eric Raeburn, Donald Reinberg, Lola Reshetko, Moreland & Jean Richmond, Michael & Linda Rogers, Steven & Heather Rottenborn, Raymond & Jean-Marie Spoelman, Richard Stallcup, Scott & Linda Terrill, Rebecca & David Weber, Francis ToldiGerald & Nicolette White, Alan Wight, Allan & Julia Wofchuck, Christine Wolfe, Claire Wolfe

For the 1996 Birdathon

Steven & Renee Margolin

In the Memory of:

Gertrude Bialos
Eli Holst
David Palmer Tobias

SUNDAY MARCH 16 STRYBING ARBORETUM, GOLDEN GATE PARK

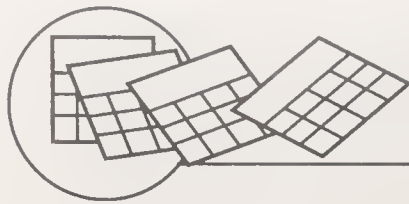
Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the front gate of the arboretum (near 9th Avenue and Lincoln Way). On this morning trip we will be looking for spring birds that are attracted to the arboretum's varied habitats. Beginners (and all others) welcome. Leader: Alan Ridley (415) 566-3241.

PLAN AHEAD

Saturday March 22. San Francisco Bird Blitz with Alan Hopkins.

June 27 - 29. Lassen National Park with Dan and Joan Murphy.

Trips marked with a (\$) go to parks or other sites that require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked with a (*). See below. Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEADING A TRIP, call Lillian Fujii (510) 236-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.



February Meeting

Live Bats Bring a Vital Environmental Message to GGAS

Bats are the only major predators of night-flying insects. A single bat can eat up to 600 insects (including mosquitoes!) in one hour; one colony of Mexican free-tail bats in Texas consumes 250 tons of insects nightly. Around the world, bats are vital in the pollination and distribution of many plant species, including approximately 450 cash crops that humans depend on. Over 90% of seed dispersal in many tropical rain forests is accomplished by the many bat species found in these forests. Sixteen of California's 23 species of bats are now protected due to their rapid decline in numbers. Over the last 20 years, we have lost up to 80% of our state's bats, a tragedy that is being repeated worldwide.

Patricia Winters, with the help of her live, tame bats, will be bringing her presentation, "Wings in the night; a celebration of bats," to our next meeting! The vital role bats play in our ecosys-

tems will be discussed, and several tame, indigenous bats will be brought in to observe up close. The accompanying slide show illustrates the tremendous diversity of the order Chiroptera and deals with the many myths and misconceptions about these beneficial mammals.



PHOTO BY WILLIAM E. RAINEY

Thursday

February 13

7:30 p.m.

Northbrae Community Church

941 The Alameda, Berkeley

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

Golden Gate Audubon Society

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